

## About Entry Visa

Entry into mainland China requires a valid visa-which needs to be obtained before landing in the country. Only transit travelers entering and exiting China within 24 hours can apply for a transit G visa upon arrival. A visa is required from all country except Taiwan and Hong Kong residents. All the entry visas listed below can be obtained at Chinese embassies and consulates in your home country. Each visa requires specific documentation and the final processing fee depends on the country in which you reside, the number of entries you request, how long it takes to process, and the duration of the visa. Along with a visa, your passport must be valid for at least another ix months and have one blank page to enter China.

**Tourist Visa (L Visa)**-tourist visas are the easiest to obtain. You may apply for a tourist visa in Chinese consulates and embassies abroad, or through private visa companies or travel agencies. You need two passport photos, an application form and the application fee. Tourist visas are granted for up to 60 days, but may be extended by another 30 in Shanghai. An L visa may be single or double entry.

**Business Visa (F Visa)**-intended for foreigners invited to China for short-term research or business, may freelancers, entrepreneurs or non-working foreign residents also depend on this visa to live long-term in Shanghai. However, it should be noted here that working under an F visa is illegal in China. to enter China on an F visa, you may apply at a Chinese consulate or embassy abroad or within a private visa or travel agency. Outside of China, F visas require a stamped invitation letter from a company in China. F visas are valid for single, double or multiple entries within a three, sic or twelve-month period. Many travelers pick up long-term f visas in Hong Kong , where travel agencies (excluding CITS)don't require an invitation letter-only a passport and the fee. Applying for an F visa in Shanghai requires the original and a copy of the business license of the sponsoring company, a temporary residence permit, and an invitation letter. Also, US citizens now have limits on the duration of consecutive days an F visa holder may stay in China. The standard is 30 days (meaning you have to leave the country every month and come back in) but you may ask for 60 days. Some visa agencies in Shanghai offer Americans no-restriction F visas for an added fee.

**Student Visa ( X Visa)**-student visas are issued for six months or more and require an application form from the ministry of education, a letter of admission form an accredited Chinese university, and a physical examination form. Some students, unable to gather documentation in time, enter China with a tourist visa and change to a student visa once in China (with the help of the university). Student visas are valid for the time of study and universities can help extend if needed.

**Permanent Resident (D Visa)**-select individuals qualify for a D Visa, which grants hassle-free stays for up to five years in China. These special visas are for significant investors in China (you may qualify if you have invested more than 52 million into China during the past three years, and you have been living in China during this period) of foreign children of Chinese citizens.

**Work Visa (Z Visa)**- work visas are granted to working foreigners. Employers should take care of all the paperwork. Requirements vary depending on the type of company you are working for. The documentation may include a copy of the work approval certificate, the original and copy of the business registration license, work visa application, health certificate and four passport photos. Work visas can be obtained in your home country. However, an entry visa marked 'Z' is only valid for 30 days. During this 30 day period, the employer must process a year-long work permit and residence permit.

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Foreign Correspondent Visa (J-1 Visa) or Short-term Foreign Correspondent Visa (J-2 Visa)-J visas are given to journalists or foreign correspondents on assignment. J-1 visas can sponsor family members' residence permits as well. If you plan to join a company job immediately upon arrival, your employer should take care of all visa processing. Most companies issue a short-term Z visa before departing and convert these to a longer work visa and grant a residence permit once in the country. If you are a job seeker, your F or L visa can be extended in Shanghai for a certain period of time until you find a full-time job. At the time of writing, applicants must leave Shanghai and re-enter in order to change an L or F visa to a work Z visa. Most companies will pay for this required trip to Hong Kong for visa processing.

#### Using a Visa Agency

Chinese bureaucracy depends on middlemen, so it's appropriate to use an outside agent in these matters. Plus, it's a good way to avoid the hassles of waiting in line and filling out forms. Make sure that the visa consultancy is experienced and has good relations with the government. If you are working on your own or looking for a job, working with a visa agency to apply for a new visa or extend your current one is also a good solution. However, be wary of agencies that offer visas without proper documentation, such as automatic F visas without invitation letters. While many of them operate successfully, be aware that these services are borderline illegal and using them can be risky (these agencies simply sign you up as an employee of a random company). A raid on such firms in 2006 forced a number of foreigners in Shanghai to leave the country.

#### Overstaying Your Visa

If you don't extend your visa in time and are still in China, you may face stiff fines. For each day you stay past the expiry date, the fee is a minimum ¥500. The maximum fee is ¥5,000 (10 days). Some offenders have been able to negotiate a lower fee or get out of paying all together, but it's not guaranteed. Also keep in mind that visas expire when your passport does, so apply for a new passport well ahead of time.

#### Arriving in China

All foreigners are required to register with the local police upon arrival in Shanghai. Simply go to the nearest police station in your neighborhood, present your passport, and report where you are staying and for how long. Once registered, you receive a pink form, which is your temporary residence permit and is needed when applying for a longer-term residence permit. For F or L visa holders, the temporary resident permit is your sole proof of residence. For short stays, your hotel or service apartment will register you without notifying you. You can also ask your landlord about registering-some housing compounds are willing to do it for foreign tenants.

#### Health Certificate

In order to apply for a work visa and then a residence permit, you and your family members need a Chinese government-issued health certificate. To receive this documentation, you need to undergo a health evaluation at the Shanghai Health & Quarantine Verification Office on 15 Jinbang Lu (62688851) in Hongqiao. Report to the office with two passport photos, your company's business license, and ¥800 (employers should cover all costs, prepare all necessary documentation and provide a room in a gown with several other fidgety foreigners, having blood drawn, and undertaking an x-ray and an electrocardiogram(ECG). If you prefer to get checked in your home country, you need to deliver the following documentation to the Health & Quarantine Verification form, your company

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business license, passport, and two passport photographs. After the health inspection, you will receive your certificate in one or two weeks.

#### Work Permit

Companies are required to provide work permits (Z visas) to all their foreign employees. Be wary of employers who delay in providing Z visas—they are simply saving tax money by not claiming you as an employee. If need be, tell your company you'll pay for all related fees if you do not stay longer than three months. Z visa applications are processed through the Shanghai Labour Bureau on 258 Wusong LU in Hongkou ([www.12333.gov.cn](http://www.12333.gov.cn)), and you'll need to accompany the HR person or visa agent to the office. In order to obtain a work permit, you need two companies of the application for (completed in Chinese), a copy of the business license, a CV in Chinese, an employment certificate in Chinese, a Chinese version of your stamped contract, your health certificate, your passport and a photocopy of your passport, and two passport photos. Despite being illegal, living and working on an F visa is still tolerated, but beware—the government is starting to crack down on the practice.

#### Residence Visa

If you hold a valid D,Z,X or J 1 visa and need to stay in China for one year, you and your family may apply for a residence permit at the Shanghai Public Security Bureau on 1500 Minsheng Lu in Pudong (p.64). These permits are valid for one to five years, depending on your visa, and family members must show proof of kinship (birth certificate, adoption papers or marriage certificates). China does not recognize same-sex couples or common law marriages. Residence permits also may not be extended to parents of foreign workers. In order to apply, you need an application form, temporary residence permit (pink form), passport, one passport photo, health certificate, official application letter from your employer, work permit and original foreigner employment register form, and a copy of your company's business license.

#### Chinese Citizenship

China does not recognize dual citizenship so taking Chinese citizenship means giving it up in your home country. If a foreigner marries a Chinese citizen, he or she may apply for a one-year L visa. After being married for at least five years, and living in China for that period, the foreign spouse may apply for a D visa (permanent residence). However, it's rarely granted because of other stipulations concerning the foreign spouse's monetary investments in China.

#### Students

For most students living on campus, the school will register residence. However, if a student wishes to live off campus, he or she may apply for a residence permit. Foreign students need to show a completed application form from the ministry of education and a completed approval form for off-campus accommodation from the university.

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